

Council 4 AFSCME Testimony – February 22, 2012 – Planning and Development Committee

HB 5035, AN ACT REDUCING MANDATES FOR MUNICIPALITIES.

Good morning Chairman Gentile, Chairman Cassano and members of the Planning and Development Committee. My name is Lisamarie Fontano and I am president of AFSCME Local 387, representing the Cheshire Correctional Complex. Our union, along with AFSCME Locals 391 and 1565, represents nearly 5,000 front-line correctional employees in Connecticut. I am here to speak against section 1 of HB5035.

Our union has spoken out against changing the shielding law, but recognizing the array of powerful economic interests - bankers, realtors, mortgage brokers and the like - who have demanded that this law be changed, we realize that the odds are that it will change. So it is now our duty to get the language in that best protects our members. The last speaker's testimony covered this.

I would like to speak to you about why this shielding is so important to correction, public safety, judicial and DCF employees. Our members have the difficult and trying duty of keeping some of society's most dangerous offenders in prison. We have had to carry out at least one execution. We regularly lock up organized crime and gang leaders. We have locked up terrorism suspects and federal detainees. There are plenty of examples of criminals trying to obtain the residential and personal information of correction officers. Such inmate information requests about staff have been used to harass staff members. Information is traded in prison, almost as a commodity. Information on staff is sometimes highly sought after. Two years ago a female correction officer testified before the legislature about an inmate who tattooed the first and last name of this officer on his arm and finger.

Inmates are aware that staff must follow a strict policy of no "undue familiarity" with inmates. There have been incidents where inmates have tried to get staff in trouble with superiors by pretending that a staff member gave their personal information to an inmate.

Correction staff jobs are stressful. Two different actuarial reports found that the average mortality age for a correction officer is 58. This high mortality rate is due to the affects of job stress. Inmates FOI'ing our personal information is one more stress factor that we don't need.

We know when we become correction officers that we will be at risk on the job. We accept that. But, our families should not have to be put at risk because an inmate can access information that can eventually lead to the discovery of our families' names and addresses. I have attached a Hartford Courant article about the murder of a federal judge's family that has all the earmarks of a retaliatory killing, because the judge handled the case of a leader of a criminal enterprise. Our staff deals with members of criminal enterprises all the time.

This is why we oppose the fix in the Governor's bill. Under that fix, our records are available for anyone who wants to attack a correction officer in every town hall across the state. We need a fix that will redact our information as much as possible.

Please reject that language in section 1 of House Bill 5035. Please give us the strongest protection language possible. I would be happy to answer any questions.

www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-0503010123mar01,0,4913954.story

chicagotribune.com

Federal judge's family killed

Husband, mother found slain in basement

Jurist had been a target of white supremacist

By David Heinzmann and Jeff Coen

Tribune staff reporters

March 1, 2005

U.S. District Judge Joan H. Lefkow found her husband and mother shot dead in the basement of her home Monday night, less than a year after white supremacist Matthew Hale was convicted of trying to have her murdered for holding him in contempt of court.

Michael F. Lefkow, 64, an attorney, and Donna Grace Humphrey, 90, were lying in blood with gunshot wounds to the head when the judge arrived to a darkened house at 6 p.m., a source close to the investigation said.

Police said they were conducting "death investigations," and cautioned about drawing any connections to Hale, who is awaiting sentencing for trying to solicit the judge's murder. Sources said Michael Lefkow and Humphrey were found together, each was shot once in the head. No weapon was recovered, but police found two .22 caliber casings.

Security at the Lefkow home--including a camera mounted outside the home and guards posted on the block in unmarked cars--had been beefed up after the allegations against Hale emerged in January 2003. But neighbors said the extra measures tailed off about the time Hale was convicted in April 2004.

Investigators say there was a sign of forced entry, a broken window, at the family's three-story gray-sided home in the 5200 block of North Lakewood Avenue in the Edgewater neighborhood.

Neighbors on Monday night said the judge ran into the street screaming after discovering the bodies and was consoled by police officers who put a blanket over her. She was taken to the Belmont Area headquarters while detectives, evidence technicians and federal agents worked the scene in and around the home.

Michael Lefkow was an attorney in private practice, focusing in employment law. He was deeply involved in the Episcopal Church, including his parish, St. Luke's in Evanston. He ran unsuccessfully for

advertisement



Cook County judge in 2002. The couple married in 1975 and have four daughters; Michael Lefkow also had a daughter from a previous marriage. The couple's youngest daughter, who lived at home, was in the house in the middle of the afternoon to get some gym clothes, according to a federal law enforcement source. She did not see either her father or grandmother, the source said.

Thomas Robb, a close friend of the couple who runs a food pantry in Edgewater, said Michael Lefkow was recovering from surgery for an Achilles tendon injury suffered while playing tennis. He said Humphrey, who was visiting from Colorado, was frail and able to get around only with two canes.

"The thing that hurts us and hurts the family is, he wanted to walk each of his daughters down the aisle and there's a couple of them that are still unmarried," Robb said. "This is a very big loss."

Hale, the 33-year-old founder of the white supremacist World Church of the Creator, was arrested in January 2003 and charged with soliciting Lefkow's murder a month after she held him in contempt for continuing to call his church by that name after an appellate court ruled such a use was a trademark infringement.

Based largely on testimony from Hale's "security chief"--an FBI informant--a jury convicted Hale of soliciting the judge's murder last April. U.S. District Judge James Moody is scheduled to sentence Hale on April 6.

Hale is being held in the Metropolitan Correctional Center in the South Loop under special administrative measures taken against suspected terrorists since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. The restrictions prohibit him from communicating with others through the media, mail or telephone and from having visitors under the theory that he could incite violence among his followers.

The restrictions were ordered by then-U.S. Atty. Gen. John Ashcroft on March 3, 2003, less than two months after Hale's arrest.

Hale has been allowed to communicate with Moody, who was brought in from Hammond to preside over the trial.

Within the last two weeks, federal agents in Chicago received a bulletin saying the white supremacist Aryan Brotherhood was possibly planning to harm "law enforcement and their families," according to a source. Information on what security measures might have been put in place in the wake of that alert was not immediately available.

Federal investigators said a protective detail was organized to protect the judge Monday night.

Timothy Murphy, Hale's cousin and an attorney who briefly represented him, called the news of the slayings "horrifying."

But Murphy said he did not think Hale was capable of violence.

"I don't believe that Matt attempted to threaten Judge Lefkow in the first place," he said.

But Murphy added: "I would imagine that if what this is is a homicide that Matt's followers are going to be under closer scrutiny."

Hale first came to prominence in 1999 as a white supremacist and head of the World Church of the Creator. Over the Independence Day weekend that year, former church member Benjamin Smith went

on a shooting spree directed at racial minorities, killing two and wounding nine.

The FBI investigated Hale's role but he was never charged.

In 2000, the Oregon-based group TE-TA-MA Truth Foundation, more commonly called Church of the Creator, sued Hale for trademark infringement.

Lefkow ruled in Hale's favor, but a federal appeals court in 2002 ruled that Hale's group had violated the Oregon church's trademark. In October 2003, Lefkow imposed sanctions of \$200,000 against Hale when he continued to use the name despite the appellate court ruling. Federal prosecutors alleged that dispute led him to seek to have her killed.

Evidence presented at Hale's trial included an e-mail he sent his security chief, Tony Evola, asking for Lefkow's home address. A message, posted on the "White Aryan Resistance" Web site, gave the address and made derogatory comments about the Lefkows, presuming they were Jewish.

Tribune staff reporters Tom Rybarczyk, Carlos Sadovi, Oscar Avila, Matt O'Connor, Ana Beatriz Cholo and Todd Lighty contributed to this report

Copyright © 2012, Chicago Tribune

